Examining the Effects of Perceptions of Voter Suppression and Voter Fraud on Support for Voter Identification Laws in the United States

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Abstract: Democracy is fundamentally grounded in the people's right to vote, but what happens when the same mechanisms meant to protect the electoral process become barriers? This study examined the relationship between perceptions of voter suppression and voter fraud and support for voter restrictions, such as requiring identification to vote. The study utilized data from the American National Election Studies 2020 Times Series Study, examining a sample of 5,264 voters. Results revealed that voter support for voter ID laws depends on their perceptions of voter integrity and suppression. The more confidence voters have in the integrity of elections and the more they believe in voter suppression, the less likely they are to support voter identification requirements. Other demographic factors are considered.

Keywords: Voter ID laws, voter suppression, election integrity.

INTRODUCTION

The right to vote is one of the most cherished and fundamental values in the United States. It is enshrined in the tenants of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the US Constitution, advanced in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and affirmed in a growing number of landmark court decisions (e.g., *United States v Reese et al*., 1876; *Guinn v. United States*, 1915; *Smith v. Allwright*, 1944; *South Carolina v. Katenbach*, 1966; *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013; *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*, 2021; *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*, 2008). Along with the right to vote is the notion that free and fair elections are the building blocks of democratic government systems. Ansolabehere (2009), for example, sees the values of "access" and "integrity" as the "heart" of any initiative to improve elections in the United States. He explains that accessibility can be achieved if polls are available to all who wish to vote, and integrity is assured if only eligible voters are allowed to cast a ballot, and those ballots are correctly tabulated. The tradeoff between these two values—protecting the right to vote and the integrity of elections—has led to contentious debates among opposing camps. In one camp are proponents who argue that the laws are effective tools for protecting the integrity of elections by safeguarding against those who want to defraud the public (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014; see also the Court's position in the *Crawford* case). In the opposing camp are those who assert that the laws are intentionally created to disenfranchise specific segments of the population (e.g., blacks) and subsequently suppress their power in society (Manheim & Porter, 2019; Minnite, 2010).

While much has been written on the opposing viewpoints, less is known about the factors that shape citizens' opinions of voter ID laws. Is support for the law dependent on one's political affiliation, as Pastor *et al*. (2010) observed? Are citizens' emphasis on voter suppression versus voter integrity a deciding factor? Are there differences in the socio-demographics of voters who support voter identification laws versus those who do not? These are some of the questions this study will address. To set the stage, we begin with a brief overview of the historical background of voting laws in the United States. It follows with a discussion of the pros and cons of voter identification laws before closing with a review of factors that help shape citizens' perceptions of voter identification laws.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF VOTING RIGHTS IN THE US

On February 26, 1869, the United States Congress passed the 15th Amendment. Ratified on February 2, 1870, the Amendment explicitly outlines that "[t]he right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of

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servitude." An apparent loophole of the Amendment is that it merely prohibited voting disenfranchisement based on race, color, or former slave status. Left open is the possibility that other standards or practices can be used to create barriers to voting. Indeed, by the 1890s, the implementation of practices and policies such as poll taxes, literacy tests, grandfather clauses, and white primaries were allegedly used to undermine voting rights protection. In an apparent address to these circumventions, on August 6, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. Section 2 of the Act states that "[n]o voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision in a manner which results in a denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color, or in contravention of the guarantees set forth in section 1973b" (42 U.S.C. §1973). Modifications to the VRA occurred in 1970, 1975, and again in 1982. The 1993 passage of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) not only prohibited barriers to registration and curtailed the practice of removing voters from voting roles, but it made it easier for people to vote by mandating that states' department of vehicles offer voter registration applications to those seeking a license or state identification card. Nine years later, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) set the stage for creating voter ID laws when it provided states with funds to improve election administration and replace outdated voting systems.

Collectively, the constitutional amendments, the VRA, NVRA, and the HAVA are meant to serve as safeguards for guaranteeing accessibility to the polls for all eligible voters. However, there are allegations that policies such as voter identification laws can emasculate those safeguards. To be clear, state laws from as far back as the 1950s required some form of identification at polling sites. Voter identification laws surfaced as a mechanism to ensure that impersonators are not falsely casting ballots in the name of legitimate, registered voters (Ahlquist *et al*., 2014). Although the NVRA required states to create a system that verifies voter information and assigns voter identification numbers, no state at the time mandated voters to show a government-issued photo ID to cast a ballot. That changed in 2006 when the Senate Enrolled Act No. 483 made Indiana the first to enact a strict photo ID law. The *Crawford* case addressed the constitutionality of the Indiana law when in a 6-3 decision, the US Supreme Court seemingly referred to the NVRA by arguing that Indiana "has a valid interest in participating in a nationwide effort to improve and modernize election procedures that have been criticized as antiquated and inefficient" (Marion County Election Board, 553 U.S. 181, 2008, sect II, para. 2). Following the Court decision, states nationwide began enacting voting ID laws. As of date, 70% of states (n=35) have responded by requiring voters to furnish some form of identification before they can register to vote, receive a ballot, and/or cast their ballot (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2023). Nine of those states (Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin), have been classified as having the strictest laws in the country (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2023).

VOTER FRAUD OR VOTER SUPPRESSION?

The partisan argument of proponents of voter ID laws is that the laws are essential for preventing voter fraud. In her book titled *The Myth of Voter Fraud*, Minnite (2010) uses a legal framework to define voter fraud as "the intentional, deceitful corruption of the electoral process by voters" (p. 36). Her definition covers both "knowingly and willingly" providing false information to establish voting eligibility, the actual illegal voting, or engaging in a scheme that allows others to vote illegally. She further explains that the broader definition of election fraud includes "[a]ll other forms of corruption of the electoral process and corruption committed by elected or election officials, candidates, party organizations, advocacy groups, or campaign workers…" (p. 36). According to Minnite (2010, 2007), allegations of voter fraud create a "political myth" about the electoral process, which has given rise to the justification of policies, such as voter ID laws, that offer one political party an edge over the other party. The restricting and shaping of the electorate in favor of a particular political party appear to be part of a recurring theme in American politics, as party competition, mobilization and demobilization, and electoral arrangements are part of the ebb and flow of political power (Hicks *et al*., 2015). Amid this battle for political power is the belief that illegitimate voting takes away or dilutes the vote of legitimate voters, and a system to verify the eligibility of voters is an effective way to build public confidence in the electoral system (United States Senate, 2011).

The reality, however, is that there is a lack of evidence that voter fraud is systematic, widespread, or occurs at a level that is large enough to affect the outcome of an election (Ahlquist *et al*., 2014; Clarke,

2012; Commission on Federal Election Reform, 2005; Eggers *et al*., 2021; Levitt, 2007; Minnite, 2010, 2014; Sobel, 2009). For instance, Levitt's (2007) seminal study on voter fraud found incidents of fraud occurring at a rate between 0.0003% and 0.0025% (see also the Brennan Center for Justice 2017 report "Debunking the Voter Fraud Myth," which presents a list of studies that found no evidence of widespread fraud). In fact, he concludes that voting fraud is so rare that "[i]t is more likely that an individual will be struck by lightning than that he will impersonate another voter at the polls" (p. 4). Furthermore, although calls for ID laws are usually entwined with calls to protect confidence in the system, scholarly studies following the *Crawford* case have consistently found little to no evidence that photo ID laws increased voter confidence (Michael, 2020; Stewart, 2022).

While proponents of voter ID laws contend that they are necessary to prevent voter fraud, opponents raise concerns about their potential to perpetuate voter suppression (Michael, 2020). Freeman and colleagues (2009) conceptualize "voter suppression" as "any behavior intended to deter an eligible voter from casting a ballot…" (p. 1). Manheim and Porter (2019) went further by referring to voter ID laws as an "intentional" law purportedly aimed at suppressing voters. They define "intentional" voter suppression as "any action taken with the intent to make it less likely that an eligible voter's ballot will be cast or counted" (p. 2). Gradation in definitions is essential for highlighting the complexity of identifying voter suppression, for as Manheim and Porter (2019) explain, "it is extraordinarily difficult to prove the impact of burdens on voters with any degree of precision, particularly when the Court has never clarified how it should be measured" (p. 7).

Nevertheless, several studies corroborate the existence of suppression from voter ID laws, even if minuscule (Alvarez *et al*., 2008; Barreto *et al*., 2009; Esposito *et al*., 2019; Fraga & Miller, 2022; Hajnal *et al*., 2017; Henninger *et al*., 2021; Hood & Bullock, 2012; see Michael (2020) for review of studies on voter suppression). For example, Hood and Bullock (2012) found that the passage of Georgia's voter ID law resulted in an approximately 0.4% depressed voter turnout, while Esposito and her colleagues (2019) examination of laws in Rhode Island disclosed a 4.1% decrease in voter turnout. Hajnal *et al*. (2017) examined the law's strictness and found that moving from a non-strict law to a strict photo ID law depresses minority turnout by more than 5% compared to whites.

Others maintain that the relationship between those who have valid IDs and those who are more likely to vote suggests that the laws may not be as injurious as one thinks (Alvarez *et al*., 2008; Barreto *et al*., 2009; Highton & Wolfinger, 1998; Pastor *et al*., 2010, Mycoff *et al*., 2009; Vercellotti & Anderson, 2006). For example, while Vercellotti and Anderson (2006) found no evidence that voter ID laws suppressed black voter turnout, Mycoff and colleagues (2009) argued that there is little reason to suspect the laws impact turnout because engaged and politically aware voters are more likely to have a valid ID or know that they need to obtain a valid ID before an upcoming election. Thus, they surmise that those most likely affected by voter ID laws are typically groups who turn out in lower numbers. Another common argument among supporters of voter ID is that IDs are part of everyday life and are needed to complete tasks such as boarding a plane or cashing a check (von Spakovsky, 2012). That position was echoed in the opinion of the *Crawford* case when despite anecdotes of the obstacles some segments of society (e.g., minorities, the elderly, and those living in rural areas) face in obtaining a government-issued ID, the Court postulated that obtaining an ID, birth certificate, or other necessary documents are reasonable requests and does not constitute an undue burden. Altogether, these sentiments align with Kane and Wilson's (2021) findings of stronger support of voter ID laws among those who believe most people already possess some form of identification document.

PERCEPTIONS OF VOTER ID LAWS

A 2021 national survey by the Pew Research Center revealed that 76% of the 5,109 adult members of the Center's American Trends Panel strongly or somewhat favor requiring all voters to show government-issued photo identification to cast a ballot. The findings are consistent with existing literature (Alvarez *et al*., 2011; Kane & Wilson, 2021), which reports broad support for voter ID laws. The Pew's findings also revealed that 93% of Republican respondents strongly or somewhat favor the voter ID laws, compared to only 61% of Democrats. The figures support the large body of voting literature that found party affiliation to be a strong predictor of support for voter ID legislation. There is mounting evidence that partisan division is largely based on party politics, where Republican supporters are more likely to view ID laws as a barrier to voter fraud, while Democrat opposition centers on the law as a barrier to voter enfranchisement (e.g., Ansolabehere & Persily, 2008;

Gronke *et al*., 2019; Hicks *et al*., 2015; Pastor *et al*., 2010; Sheagley & Udani, 2021; Udani, 2017; Wilson & Brewer, 2013). Kane (2017), however, has a somewhat different view. While he did find that Republicans' concern of the laws centered on fraud prevention, he found that diminished support for the law among Democrats is partially due to "a function of strategic considerations involving their party's electoral chances rather than strict adherence to demonstrate principles regarding citizen' right to vote" (p. 953).

Udani's (2017) study uniquely examines the nuances between political affiliation and support of voter ID legislation. Specifically, his investigation into the strength of party identification and the percentage of the foreign-born population in the congressional district revealed that Democrats who are disengaged with their party are more likely to support voter ID laws. However, those with higher political knowledge are more than 20% less supportive of the laws. Comparatively, Republicans who are more politically sophisticated are more than 23% supportive of the laws than those with lower political awareness. He added that partisan support was also contingent on the percentage of the foreign-born population in the district. Here he found that Democrats with lower political knowledge and Republicans, regardless of their level of political knowledge, who reside in districts with a large foreign-born population are more likely to support voter ID laws.

Probes into racial/ethnic influence on perceptions of voter ID laws have produced mixed and nuanced results. For example, Alvarez *et al*. (2011) paradoxically found that non-whites moderately support the laws more than whites. Meanwhile, others have found that implicit racism (Banks & Hicks, 2016), resentment toward blacks (Wilson & Brewer, 2013; Wilson *et al*., 2014), and Hispanics (Perez, 2010) were correlated with support for the laws. Wilson and colleagues (2014) use of racial images revealed that white respondents who were shown visual images of black voters and poll workers were more likely to support voter ID laws than white respondents who were not shown the images. Brown-Iannuzzi *et al*. (2023) recent use of visual images revealed that support for voter ID laws could also be conditioned by who respondents felt were voting illegally – the authors found that support for voter ID laws was greater when respondents visualized non-whites, primarily Hispanics, were casting fraudulent ballots. They also report that support of the laws depended on whom the respondents felt should and should not be allowed to vote. When supporters of voter ID laws were asked to imagine who should be allowed to vote, respondents primarily envisioned white voters. In contrast, when asked to imagine who should not be allowed to vote, respondents largely envisioned black voters. Assumptions that non-whites are more likely to engage in illegal voting may help explain why some supporters are more likely to see voter ID laws as a tool for fighting voter fraud. Contrariwise, supporters' belief that white voters should have privileged access to voting over black voters may help explain why some opponents of voter ID laws see the laws as a tactic to disenfranchise blacks (Brown-Iannuzzi *et al*., 2023).

Previous literature also shows that once political factors are considered, many of the remaining demographic covariates are statistically insignificant (e.g., Gronke *et al*., 2019; Kane, 2017; Wilson & Brewer, 2013), have minimal effect in predicting support for voter ID legislation (Alvarez *et al*., 2011), or simply inconclusive. For instance, while Udani (2017) found that those with higher education were more supportive of the laws, Wilson *et al*. (2014) focus on white respondents revealed that having higher education decreases the odds of support for the law. However, Wilson and Brewer (2013) found educational attainment to be an insignificant determinant of support for voter ID laws. In terms of geographic location, Wilson *et al*. (2014) found that living in the South increased support, while Alvarez *et al*. (2011) analysis of independent effects disclosed that even though the majority in each state was in favor of voter ID laws, the percentage of the population that support the measure ranged from a low of 60.9% in Massachusetts to a high of 88.3% in Hawaii. In terms of sex, being male was found to decrease the likelihood of support (Wilson *et al*., 2017), while another study found that both sexes were equally supportive of the laws (Alvarez *et al*., 2011). Lastly, with regard to political knowledge and requests for identification at the polls, a one-unit increase in political awareness was found to be associated with a -1.30 change in the odds ratio of support for voter ID laws (Udani, 2017), and voters who are asked to show identification at polling stations were found to be more supportive of voter ID laws than voters who were not asked to show an ID (Alvarez *et al*., 2011).

Based on the review of the existing literature, we predict great cohesion in terms of overall public support of voter ID laws but partisan divisions in the level of

support. Importantly, we also predict that the basis of support will be positively influenced by the socio-demographic factors of the respondents and their perception of voter ID laws as a means of fraud prevention or a means of voter suppression.

DATA & METHODS

This study aimed to examine the relationship between perceptions of voter suppression and voter fraud and support for voter restrictions, such as requiring identification to vote. This study utilized American National Election Studies (ANES) 2020 Times Series Study data. The 2020 ANES collected data in two waves. The pre-election wave consisted of surveys and interviews administered between August 18 and November 3, 2020. The post-election surveys and interviews were conducted between November 8, 2020, and January 4, 2021. Data was gathered through phone interviews, video interviews, and web and video surveys.

Population and Sample

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2020, there were an estimated 233 million eligible voters in the US – those who were US citizens and 18 years of age or older. Of these, the majority (67%) were white, 12% were black, 12% were Hispanic/Latino, and the remaining estimated 9% was composed of other races or more than one race (US Census Bureau, 2022). The pre-election sample contained 5,441 respondents (40.9% response rate). The post-election sample was drawn from those who participated in the first wave. The final sample for the post-election survey was 4,783, or 87.9% of the pre-election sample. Additionally, participants from the 2016 ANES survey were invited to participate in the 2020 ANES survey. The total number of pre-election surveys administered was 8,280, with 7,449 post-election surveys completed (ANES, 2021). For our study, only respondents who participated in the pre-election and post-election surveys were eligible for inclusion (n = 7,449). Cases missing data for the study variables were removed. The final sample was composed of 5,264 respondents.

Dependent Variable

The study employed support for voter ID requirements as the dependent variable to assess the effects of perceptions of voter suppression and voter fraud on respondents' support for voter laws. For the variable, Voter ID law support, respondents were asked, "Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose requiring all people to show a government issued photo ID when they vote?" The dependent variable was transformed into dichotomous variables, oppose and favor. Oppose was the referent category.

Independent Variables

Two independent variables were assessed: the frequency with which respondents perceive that voters are denied the right to vote and whether respondents had concerns about the integrity of the voting process. In the pre-election survey, respondents were asked, "How often are people denied the right to vote?" Five responses were provided: Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Fairly Often, and Very Often. Due to low responses in the Fairly Often and Very Often categories, they were combined. Never was the referent category. Voting integrity was captured by a pre-election question, "In the November 2020 general election, how accurately do you think the votes will be counted?" Five responses were provided: Not at all Accurately through Completely Accurately. Responses were combined into two categories: "0" = not at all/a little and "1" = moderately/very/completely.

Control Variables

To assess the current requirement for state identification, respondents were asked if their state required identification to vote. Three categories were provided: Yes, No, and Unsure. Yes was the reference category. Party identification was a categorical variable representing the respondents' self-ascribed political identification. The survey asked: Do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent?" Republican was the referent category.

Sex was a categorical variable. The survey asked, "What is your sex?" Two categories were provided: Male and Female, with male as the referent. Sexual orientation was a categorical variable asked: "Do you consider yourself to be heterosexual or straight, homosexual or gay or lesbian, or bisexual?" Due to a low response rate in the homosexual/gay/lesbian, bisexual, and something else categories, these three were combined. The final variable was dichotomous, coded "0" Heterosexual/Straight and "1" Non-heterosexual.

Race and ethnicity were based on the respondents' self-identified race/ethnicity. Six categories were

provided: White non-Hispanic, Black non-Hispanic, Hispanic, Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander non-Hispanic, Native American/Alaska Native or other race non-Hispanic, and Multiple races non-Hispanic. Due to low representation (less than 4% each), the last four categories were combined into an Other category. White was the referent.

Unlike previous studies that included age as a continuous or categorical variable based on the age of the respondents, we conceptualized age as a categorical variable measured by the respondents' generational year of birth. Using generational categories employed by Pew Research, age was measured in 5 generational categories: Silent: 1928-1945, Baby Boomer: 1946-1964, Generation X: 1965-1980, Millennial: 1981-1996, and Generation Z: 1997-2002 (Dimcock, 2019). As Baby Boomer was the largest category, it was selected as the referent category.

Social class was determined by the respondent. The survey asked: "How would you describe your social class?" Four categories were provided: Lower, Working, Middle, and Upper class. As middle class was the largest category, it was used as the referent. Education represents the respondent's highest level of school or highest degree. The survey provided 16 options ranging from less than 1st grade to doctorate degree. This variable was condensed into four categories: High School/GED/or less, Some College, Bachelor's Degree, and Master's or Higher Degree. High School/GED/or less was the referent category.

RESULTS

As Table **1** shows, an overwhelming majority (83.3%) favored requiring IDs to vote compared to those who do not (16.7%). When respondents were asked, "[h]ow often are people denied the right to vote," the most frequent response was rarely (37.7%), followed by occasionally (29.2%), and never (15.7%). In terms of voter integrity, 73% of respondents said they believe the votes are counted accurately, compared to 2% who felt there were irregularities in the counting of votes. More than half (58.1%) of the survey participants reported that their state required an ID, while less than a quarter (21.5%) said no; the remaining 20.4% said they were unsure. Regarding political affiliation, Table **1** shows more respondents self-identified as Republicans than Democrats (37.6 versus 33.1 percent; Independents are 29.3%). Attention to the demographic characteristics of the respondents bares an almost equal number of males and females (48.8 versus 51.2 percent) and the overwhelming majority are heterosexuals (94.3%). Most respondents are White (69.1%; Blacks=10.3%, Hispanic=11.8%), Baby Boomers (33.2%; Generation X=26.7, Millennials=24.7, Silent=7.5 and Generation Z=7.9% respectively), married or divorced (74.7%; 25.3% has never been married) and middle class (53.1%; working class=36.2%, lower class=5.9%, upper). With respect to education, an almost equal number of respondents have a High School degree, GED or less (31.8%), or have some college (29.7%). A quarter (24.9%) have a bachelor's degree, with the remaining 13.6% reported attaining a master's or professional degree.

Table 1: Univariate Statistics (N=5,264)

Variable	*n*	%
Denied Vote		
Never	826	15.7
Rarely	1,985	37.7
Occasionally	1,536	19.2
Fairly/Very Often	916	17.4
Support for Voter ID		
Favor	4,386	83.3
Oppose	878	16.7
Votes Counted Accurately		
Yes	3,830	72.8
No	1,434	27.2
State Requires ID to Vote		
Yes	2,058	58.1
No	1,130	21.5
Unsure	1,076	20.4
Party ID		
Republican	1,979	37.6
Democrat	1,743	33.1
Independent	1,543	29.3
Sex		
Male	1,986	48.8
Female	2,694	51.2
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	4,962	94.3
Non-Heterosexual	302	5.7
Homosexual, Gay, or Lesbian	117	2.2
Bisexual	135	2.6
Something Else	50	1.0

(Table 1). Continued.

Race/Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	3,637	69.1
Black/African American	544	10.3
Variable	***n***	**%**
Hispanic	621	11.8
Other	462	8.8
Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	182	3.5
Native American, Alaska Native, Other	97	1.8
Multiple Races, non-Hispanic	183	3.5
Age by Generation		
Silent: 1928-1945	396	7.5
Baby Boomers: 1946-1964	1,749	33.2
Generation X: 1965-1980	1,404	26.7
Millennial: 1981-1996	1,302	24.7
Generation Z: 1997-2002	413	7.9
Social Class		
Lower Class	308	5.9
Working Class	1,908	36.2
Middle Class	2,795	53.1
Upper Class	253	4.8
Education		
High School, GED, or less	1,672	31.8
Some College	1,563	29.7
Bachelor's Degree	1,312	24.9
Masters or Professional Degree	717	13.6

A chi-square test found a significant relationship between voter perception of the frequency with which people are denied the right to vote (voter suppression) and support for requiring an ID to vote (χ^2 =780.351; df=3; p<.001). Those who responded that voters are occasionally or fairly/very often denied the right to vote were less likely to favor requiring an ID to vote (see logistic regression model that compares voter denial to support for voter ID requirements). Whereas respondents who stated that voters are never, rarely, or occasionally denied the right to vote were more likely to support requiring an ID to vote. An effect size based on Cramer's V illustrates a significant moderate relationship (0.387, p<.001). See Table **2**.

The relationship between election integrity and support for Voter ID requirements was also significant (χ^2 =65.134; df=1; p<.001). Both categories were more likely to favor requiring an ID to vote. An effect size based on Cramer's V illustrates a significant weak relationship (-0.11, p<.001). See Table **3**.

Table 2: Chi-Square

Denied Right to Vote	**Support Voter ID**	
	Oppose (*n*=877)	**Favor (*n*=4,386)**
Never	4.1%	95.9%
Rarely	6.0%	94.0%
Occasionally	20.5%	79.5%
Fairly/Very Often	44.7%	55.3%

χ^2 (3) = 780.351; p<.001.

Table 3: Chi-Square

	Support Voter ID	
Votes Counted Accurately	**Oppose (*n*=878)**	**Favor (*n*=4,386)**
No	9.9%	90.1%
Yes	19.2%	80.6%

χ^2 (1) =65.134; p<.001.

A binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to assess the influence of voter perceptions of voter suppression and voter fraud on the dependent variable, support for requiring an ID to vote, while also controlling for individual voter characteristics. Table **4** provides the results for support for voter IDs. The model was fit to the ANES data using survey weights. In comparison to respondents who think that voters are never denied the right to vote, those who believe they are denied occasionally (b=-1.134, SE=0.201, p<0.001) or fairly/very often (b=2.033, SE=0.206, p<0.001) had significantly lower odds of supporting voter ID laws. However, there was no significant difference between those who perceived voters were never denied the right to vote compared to those who thought others were rarely denied the right to vote. Considering the second independent variable, election integrity, voters who believe that votes would be counted accurately (b=-0.583, SE=0.119, p<0.001) had significantly lower odds of favoring requiring an ID to vote than those who believe votes would not be counted correctly.

To account for the awareness of voter ID laws in the respondents' state, we controlled for their knowledge of ID requirements. Respondents who reported that their state did not require an ID (b=-2.031, SE=0.113, p<0.001) or were unsure if an ID was required (b=-0.645, SE=0.126, p<0.001) had significantly lower odds

Table 4: Voter Identification Logistic Regression (N=5,264)

	B	*SE*	*Odds Ratio*
Denied: Rarely	-0.060	0.213	0.942
Denied: Occasionally	-1.134***	0.201	0.322
Denied: Fairly/Very Often	-2.033***	0.206	0.131
Count Accuracy: Completely	-0.583***	0.119	0.558
State ID required: No	-2.031***	0.113	0.131
State ID required: Unsure	-0.645***	0.126	0.525
Democrat	-2.540***	0.184	0.079
Independent	-1.745***	0.187	0.175
Age: Generation Z	-0.325	0.209	0.723
Age: Millennial	-0.232	0.138	0.793
Age: Generation X	0.165	0.129	1.18
Age: Silent	-0.096	0.196	0.908
Female	0.207*	0.095	1.23
Non-heterosexual	-0.309	0.165	0.734
Never Married	-0.111	0.132	0.895
Black, non-Hispanic	-0.202	0.141	0.817
Hispanic	0.217	0.154	1.242
Other	-0.239	0.155	0.787
Lower class	-0.186	0.188	0.83
Working class	0.348**	0.115	1.416
Upper class	-0.931***	0.183	0.394
Some college	0.532***	0.134	1.702
Bachelor's Degree	-0.128	0.13	0.88
Masters/Professional Degree	-0.402**	0.15	0.669
Constant	5.565***	0.286	261.184

Note: *p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

of favoring ID requirements to vote, in comparison to voters who reported that IDs were required in their state.

Looking to personal characteristics, voters who identified as Democrat (*b*=-2.540, *SE*=0.184, *p*<0.001) or Independent (*b*=-1.745, *SE*=0.187, *p*<0.001) had significantly lower odds of supporting voter ID requirements, in comparison to Republican respondents. Female respondents have higher odds (1.23 times) (*b*=0.207, *SE*=0.095, *p*<0.05) of supporting voter ID requirements in comparison to males. Other demographics, such as age, sexual orientation, and race, were not significant predictors of support for requiring an ID to vote.

When considering respondent reported social class, lower class is not a significant predictor; however, in comparison to middle-class respondents, working-class respondents had higher odds (*b*=0.348, *SE*=0.115, *p*<0.010) and upper-class respondents had lower odds (*b*=-0.931, *SE*=0.183, *p*<0.001) of supporting requiring an ID to vote. Of the different education levels, in comparison to respondents who reported their highest level of education completed was HS/GED or less, respondents with some college (*b*=0.532, *SE*=0.134, *p*<0.001) reported higher odds of favoring voter ID requirements while those with a masters/professional degree (*b*=-4.02, *SE*=0.150, *p*<0.010) reported lower odds of favoring identification to vote.

DISCUSSION

The debate over voter identification rules rarely considers the question of public support. Most of the literature on this issue centers on the practical

implications of these rules. Just as the right to vote is a sacred value in the US, the right to civic participation among the governed should be too. Assessing public opinion on voter identification laws would enhance the strength of democracy because civic inclusion builds a sense of community connection, fosters political dignity, and increases the chances that citizens will comply with the decisions of the government. This is suspected to be the case because such decisions might be perceived to be more legitimate if they are the result of broader consent.

The 2020 American National Election Survey (ANES) gauges the voters' perceptions of issues such as voter integrity and voter suppression. In addition, this survey assesses support for voter identification laws. This study explored perceptions of voter fraud and voter suppression as predictors of support for voter identification laws. Five major findings are noteworthy. First, based on the review of existing literature, which found overwhelming support for voter ID laws, we predicted that most respondents in our study would likewise support the voter requirements. Indeed, we found that eighty percent of survey respondents support the laws, compared to the roughly sixteen percent who did not, which is consistent with prior studies and public opinion polls (Alvarez *et al*., 2011; Kane & Wilson, 2021; Pew Research, 2021).

The difference between those who favor the laws versus those who oppose them brings us to the second noteworthy finding. Consistent with previous research (Ansolabehere & Persily, 2008; Sheagley & Udani, 2021; Udani, 2017; Wilson & Brewer, 2013), we found strong evidence of partisan support; Republicans (37.6%) are more likely to support the laws than their Democratic (33%) and Independent (29.3%) counterparts. However, our findings provide some clues that support is not solely based on political affiliation. While support for the laws has previously been found to be contingent on factors such as the percentage of foreign-born in the district (Udani, 2017) or as a strategy for remaining the party in power (Kane, 2017), we found evidence that support of the law is contingent upon respondents' perception that the law is used as a tool to suppress votes or to prevent voter fraud.

This brings us to the third noteworthy finding. While support for voter identification legislation varies by political affiliation, it is also divided by perceptions of the frequency of voter suppression. For example, over 53% of respondents believed that voters are rarely if ever, denied the right to vote. Regarding election integrity, approximately 73% believed that votes are counted accurately. This indicates that voter support for voter ID rules depends on an individual's perceptions about voter integrity and voter suppression. The more confidence voters had in the integrity of elections and the more they believed in voter suppression, the less likely they were to support voter identification requirements. Conversely, those who believed in voter fraud and denied the existence of voter suppression were more likely to support voter identification requirements. This seemingly lends credence to Anthony Downs' (1957) rational voter hypothesis, which posits that voters rationally engage in a cost/benefit analysis that involves weighing the cost of voting (e.g., time, energy, and inconvenience) against the perceived benefits (e.g., civic duty and personal satisfaction).

The fourth important outcome of our study is evidence of geographical variance. We found that those who reside in states that already have voter ID laws in place tend to support voter ID laws, which aligns with prior findings by Alvarez *et al*. (2011). The final finding relates to the demographics of the respondent. Sex differences in the support for voter ID requirements were significant. Women were 1.2 times more likely to support these requirements than men (see Table **4**). Whereas Alvarez *et al*. (2011) found that both sexes were equally supportive of the laws (Alvarez *et al*., 2011), our findings support those of Wilson *et al*. (2017) in that being female increases the likelihood of support. Another important finding of our study is the lack of variation in support for voter ID laws attributable to race or ethnicity. Our finding is inconsistent with prior work that has found that non-white voters are more supportive of ID laws (Alvarez *et al*., 2011) or racial perspectives surrounding election integrity (Brown-Iannuzzi *et al*., 2023).

The findings along the lines of class and education were mixed. Upper-class respondents were less likely to support voter ID requirements than middle-class respondents, while working-class respondents were more likely to support them. However, our outcomes align with the work of Wilson *et al*. (2014). Our lack of significant findings concerning the lower class may be attributable to the small representation of respondents in that class. Regarding education, those with a master's or professional degree were less likely to support voter ID rules than those with a high school diploma or less. This may result from those with higher education having more faith in the election process or

possessing a more comprehensive understanding of voter ID laws' role in potentially suppressing votes and disenfranchising voters. However, those with some college education were 1.7 times more likely to offer support for voter ID rules than high school graduates (see Table **4**) Similarly, previous work has mixed results regarding the role of education in support of the law (Udani, 2017; Wilson & Brewer, 2013; Wilson *et al*., 2014).

In short, while prior work has considered a myriad of factors in support of voter ID requirements, this study uniquely considers how individuals' perceptions of voter suppression influence their support for voter ID laws while also accounting for voter perceptions of election integrity. Considering the aftermath of the 2020 US election, with increased concerns regarding widespread voter fraud, understanding how such perceptions influence support for stricter voter requirements is vital. However, it is important to note that respondent perceptions were acquired during the pre-election survey period. As concerns regarding the integrity of the election process increased after the election, current national attitudes may differ. These findings contribute valuable insights into the complexities of public attitudes toward voter ID regulations within the broader context of electoral integrity and inclusivity.

CONCLUSION

Voter identification rules remain controversial because of misleading anecdotes about voter fraud and the potential burdens they place on disadvantaged voters. For all the claims about voter fraud, there is very little evidence to support them (Ahlquist *et al*., 2014; Clarke, 2012; Commission on Federal Election Reform, 2005; Eggers *et al*., 2021; Minnite, 2010; Sobel, 2009). On the other hand, increasingly there is evidence that voter ID rules exclude voter participation along racial lines (Alvarez *et al*., 2008; Barreto *et al*., 2009; Esposito *et al*., 2019; Fraga & Miller, 2022; Hajnal *et al*., 2017; Henninger *et al*., 2021; Hood & Bullock, 2012; see Michael, 2020) for review of studies on voter suppression). Public policy, such as voter identification requirements, should be based on empirical evidence. It is time to replace the emotional rhetoric of voter fraud with rational policy analysis based on empirical evidence. Moreover, given consistent findings on majority support for voter ID laws, future research may consider devoting some attention to understanding those who do not support the laws.

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